



Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers February 20, 2007

What's New in Michigan

Michigan Traffic Safety Summit

There's still time to register for the 12th annual Michigan Traffic Safety Summit taking place March 13-15, 2007 at the Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center in East Lansing. For additional details regarding registration and a copy of the agenda link to http://michigan.gov/msp/0,1607,7-123-1593_3504_8271--,00.html

Latest Traffic Safety News

Study Validates Safety Ratings For Cars

Virginia Commonwealth University School of Business researchers, David Harless and George Hoffer, examined the relationship between the crash-test scores of various vehicles to see if they were meaningful in determining the outcome from a real-world crash. Study results indicated that the ratings issued by both the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration did show that the answer is yes, but only for cars, not sport-utility vehicles and pickup trucks. Higher car ratings did mean safer cars, for example, a car with a 1-star NHTSA crash rating had an 18% higher driver death rate than did a 5-star model car. The study researchers can't account for the lack of difference in death rate between variably rated SUVs and pickups. For further information, <http://www.bus.vcu.edu/news/five-star.html>

Source: The Wall Street Journal, January 29

New Reports Find Red-light Cameras Work

USA TODAY reported today that surveillance cameras at major intersections dramatically reduce the number of motorists who drive through red lights. Two recent studies: one in Philadelphia conducted by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and the other in Virginia Beach, conducted by Old Dominion University reported a dramatic change in driver behavior when red-light cameras are used. Debate about the controversial devices continues a decade after they were introduced. Use of the cameras is growing rapidly despite opposition that centers on constitutional grounds. About 250 communities in the U.S use the devices. Source: USA Today, February 15

Many U.S. Employers Require Pre-Employment Drug Tests

The Lakeland (Fla.) Ledger reported last week that more than four out of five U.S. employers now require pre-employment drug tests, and 39% conduct random drug testing of employees. The Society for Human Resource Management had similar findings in a 2006 survey and additionally reported that 73 percent of employers conducted for-cause testing, with 58 percent requiring drug tests after on-the-job accidents. Ron Waite, company spokesperson for Keymark, a Florida manufacturing company says, "its testing regimen -- which gives some employees who test positive a chance to attend a treatment program -- helps promote workplace safety." Source: Lakeland Ledger, February 15

Army Unit Sets Standard For Intoxication At .10 Percent

Soldiers in the 2nd Infantry Division (2nd ID) who are found to have a blood-alcohol level of .10 percent or higher -- even when they are not driving -- could face disciplinary action, the Stars and Stripes reported on February 12. "Each soldier is responsible for knowing when he or she is above the



BAC "limit," just as drivers ensure they must not drive a vehicle when their BAC reaches or exceeds a certain limit," stated the new policy unveiled by division commander Maj. Gen. James Coggin. The policy comes after a recent spike in alcohol-related incidents among 2nd ID soldiers, including a number of underage-drinking reports. The policy calls for quarterly training sessions to show 2nd ID troops "what the .10 BAC level is and what effects an above-.10-BAC has."

These Back-Seat Drivers Are Moving Up Front

There are computer-based gadgets selling for \$200 or less that tell you how you're driving. The CarChip from Davis Instruments and the ScanGauge II by Linear-Logic plug into a car's engine control computer and keep track of any bad behavior displayed behind the wheel. Some of these devices display the data immediately on a gauge, so you can watch your car's miles per gallon fall when you speed up. Others store the facts on a computer chip, to be downloaded later and put into charts where, for example, all extreme braking is shown with bright red lines. For further information, visit: <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/04/business/yourmoney/04novel.html?ex=1328245200&en=89417336058aa0d6&ei=5090&partner=rssuserland&emc=rss>

It Is No Longer Just A License To Drive

According to the Associated Press, there is a state revolt against a national driver's license. The Real ID Act of 2005, a federal law sets a national standard for driver's licenses and requires states to link their record-keeping systems to national databases. States that do not comply by May 2008 will find that their driver's licenses fall short of Real ID's standards and cannot be used to board an airplane or enter a federal building or open some bank accounts. On Jan. 26, the Maine Legislature passed a resolution objecting to the law and lawmakers in Georgia, Wyoming, Montana, New Mexico, Vermont, and Washington state are also expected to pass laws or adopt resolutions declining to participate in the federal identification network. About a dozen other states have active legislation against Real ID, including Arizona, Georgia, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Utah, and Wyoming.

Deployed Airbags Pose Threat To Your Hearing

While an airbag might save your life in a car crash, it could also cost you your hearing. Dr. G. Richard Price, a researcher at Auditory Hazard Analysis, reported at a national hearing conference that 17 percent of people exposed to deployed airbags in American cars will suffer from permanent hearing loss. His findings also show, contrary to what experts have previously thought, that airbag deployment is more hazardous to the ear when a car's windows are rolled up. "Cars with smaller airbags sold in other parts of the world would likely pose less auditory danger when tested under identical circumstances", Price said. For further information, visit: http://www.consumeraffairs.com/news04/2007/02/airbags_hearing.html

Crash Renews Licensing Concerns About Older Drivers

Earlier this week, an 84-year-old driver plowed through an elementary school lunchroom and killed an 8-year-old boy. This prompted a renewed discussion about how old is too old to drive, an issue state legislatures continue to grapple with in the wake of similar tragedies in recent years. At least two dozen states and the District of Columbia have laws singling out older drivers for special attention, from required road tests to vision examinations, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. Other states are weighing those changes against the rights of millions of older people to have the independence a license allows. Advocacy groups for the elderly urge states not to overreact to the incident noting that accidents happen in every age group and that taking away an older person's license could rob them of their independence. For further information, visit: <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/02/03/health/main2428859.shtml>



NY Politician Wants iPod Use To Be Illegal While Crossing Street

Senator Carl Kruger, a NY state senator wants to make it illegal to use an iPod, cell phone or blackberry while crossing the street. This follows the death of two pedestrians killed both in Brooklyn, both listening to music on the headset while crossing a busy intersection. Reporters couldn't find a single person who thought the bill was a good idea. "iPods don't kill pedestrians. Cars and trucks kills pedestrians. So instead of blaming the victim, our elected officials should be passing tougher laws for reckless driving," said Paul Steeley White of Transportation Alternatives. For further information, visit: <http://abclocal.go.com/wabc/story?section=local&id=5008777>

4th International Driving Symposium On Human Factors In Driver Assessment, Training And Vehicle Design

TRB is cosponsoring the 4th International Driving Symposium on Human Factors in Driver Assessment, Training, and Vehicle Design on July 9-12, 2007, in Stevenson, Washington. The symposium will focus on providing an interdisciplinary forum for scientific exchange among users of driving assessment tools, applications, and technology. Attendees are expected to include researchers and practitioners working on applications of driving assessment from the perspective of engineering, psychology, medicine, and public health. For further information, visit: <http://ppc.uiowa.edu/driving-assessment/2007>

Montana Bill Would Require Drivers To Know English

Rep. Dennis Himmelberger of Billings, Montana has proposed a law that would require that licensing examiners determine proficiency in the English language before getting a driver's license. They would also need to ascertain the citizenship of all those applying for a license, and note the home country on the license. Himmelberger has said that the state has an interest in making sure everyone can read road signs and communicate with police.

Microsoft And Ford Venture Quickly Accelerates Infotainment Systems

Microsoft and Ford Motor Company unveiled at last month's Consumer Electronics Show, a jointly developed product, called Sync to smartly interface, via Bluetooth or USB connectivity, with a wide variety of gadgets, from cell phones and PDAs to Apple iPods. Drivers can access and play music, make phone calls, or listen to text messages out loud by using wheel-mounted buttons or through voice commands. Similar functionality has been available from aftermarket vendors and in many high-end luxury vehicles from the likes of BMW and Mercedes-Benz. Sync will be available on a dozen 2008 models this fall, including less expensive cars like the Ford Focus and Fusion. By the 2009 model year, it should be available on nearly all Ford, Lincoln, and Mercury vehicles. For further information, visit: http://www.businessweek.com/autos/content/feb2007/bw20070205_942932.htm

Source: Business Week, February 2007 Source: The New York Times, February 4

Volvo Braking System Could Cut Collisions By Half

Volvo has unveiled a new system, called City Safety, which can help drivers avoid the low-speed collisions so common in urban traffic. The manufacturer hopes it will help avoid half of all rear-end collisions. When the system senses that a collision is imminent, the car will brake automatically through hydraulic pump activation. Volvo plans to introduce City Safety to the market within the next two years. Source: Automotive Body Repair News, February 1



News from the USDOT

Bush Administration's Budget Request Of \$67 Billion Will Finance Vital Construction, Congestion and Safety Programs

The Bush Administration is requesting \$67 billion for 2008 to finance key transportation construction, congestion relief and safety programs. U.S. Secretary of Transportation Mary E. Peters announced on February 2. "Our goal is to deliver a transportation system that frees all of us to make daily decisions confident we can reach our destinations safely, without worrying about how we will get there, or if we can make it on time," Secretary Peters said. The Administration is seeking a record \$42 billion for highway construction and safety programs, the Secretary said. To view the news release from the US Department of Transportation, visit: <http://www.dot.gov/affairs/peters020507.htm>

Work-Home

AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety Finds 16-Year-Old Drivers Involved in 38% Fewer Fatal Crashes in States with Most Comprehensive GDL Programs

Sixteen-year-old drivers are involved in 38% fewer fatal crashes and 40% fewer crashes resulting in injuries if their state has a graduated driver-licensing (GDL) program with at least five of seven common components, according to a study released yesterday by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. "We commissioned this study to better understand the ability of legislation to make a difference on teen driver safety. Based on the research results, the impact of GDL programs is highly impressive," said J. Peter Kissinger, AAA Foundation president and CEO. No state had more than five GDL components in effect during the study. Now Delaware has all seven components, and Kentucky, Rhode Island, and the District of Columbia have six. Darbelnet also stated, "Parents can help, too, by imposing limits that their state laws might be missing." For further information, visit: <http://biz.yahoo.com/prnews/070215/aqth023.html?v=4> The report "Nationwide Review of Graduated Driver Licensing," is available online at www.aaafoundation.org

Study Finds Teen Drivers Plagued By Distractions Behind the Wheel

A study by the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and State Farm Insurance Co found that teens are heeding warnings about drinking and driving, but they routinely face behind-the-wheel distractions from mobile phones to passengers that contribute to thousands of fatal crashes every year. Teens often take the wheel amid commotion, angst or fatigue that would be challenging even for older drivers, said Dr. Flaura Winston, chief investigator for the study. Nearly 90 percent of teens reported seeing peers drive while talking on cell phones and more than half spotted drivers using hand-held games, listening devices or sending text messages. Researchers say they will use the study to push for legislation such as stricter requirements for graduated drivers licenses, which can include mandated supervised driving with parents, night driving curfews and passenger restrictions. For further information, visit: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/15587338>

Nation's Top Transportation Official Urges Manufacturers to Provide Free or Discounted DOT Certified Helmets or Driver Safety Training with the Purchase of Every New Motorcycle

Saying "the time has come to make the helmet standard safety equipment," U.S. Secretary of Transportation Mary E. Peters called on manufacturers to provide free or heavily discounted DOT certified helmets or driver safety training with the purchase of every new motorcycle sold in the United States. "Helmets and proper training are just as important as brakes or headlights when it comes to the well-being of motorcyclists," Secretary Peters said. "We shouldn't be letting any customer take a bike out of the store without a helmet as part of the package. Safety shouldn't have to be an option



when purchasing a motorcycle." Secretary Peters said only 58 percent of riders wear helmets today, which is down 13 percent from just four years ago. She added that manufacturers could help reverse the trend by getting helmets into riders' hands and training them how to ride safely, noting that 700 motorcyclists would survive crashes every year if they wore helmets.

Motorcycle deaths surge in Missouri and Kansas: As bike ownership increases, both states seek ways to reduce the number of deaths.

Traffic safety advocates call it a huge problem that the entire country faces as motorcycle ownership surges. Many say the growing number of deaths seems to correspond with the increasing popularity of motorcycles, spurred by baby boomers getting back on the bike. Both Kansas and Missouri are experiencing a decline in overall highway fatalities but are approaching a record number of motorcycle deaths. "Every safety improvement we've made over the years with seat belts, air bags and all that has been eliminated by motorcycle fatalities," said Rusty James, a former Johnson County police officer and avid motorcycle rider. Missouri has created a special task force to find ways to reduce motorcycle deaths. Kansas is developing a media campaign and looking for ways to expand education efforts. Earlier this month, a traffic safety task force recommended that Kansas eventually enact a mandatory helmet law and develop a comprehensive motorcycle safety program. Source: Kansas City Star, January 29

International Traffic Safety News

Technology Can Help Drivers Avoid Dangerous Curves

Samantha Chen, from Queensland University of Technology's Centre for Accident Research & Road Safety is leading a research project to design an intelligent transport system to reduce the number of curve-related crashes. In Queensland, curve-related crashes account for almost 64% of fatalities. The system, known as the Ubiquitous Situation Awareness Risk Prediction Model for Road Safety (UbiSARPS), performs real-time data analysis to detect possible high-risk driving situations and can determine an intervention according to a risk assessment score which will be transferred to the vehicle to warn the driver, or to correct the mistake automatically for the driver.

UK Study Says Stressed Drivers Endanger Others

Brake, a UK road safety charity and Green Flag, an insurer studied stressed drivers and reported that angry drivers are more likely to take risks that endanger other drivers by speeding, lane changing, tailgating, and red-light jumping. Brake is calling for an advertising campaign to warn drivers of the dangers of driving while stressed. Almost 80% of UK motorists surveyed drive while angry about other drivers. Nigel Charlesworth, a spokesman for Green Flag says, "It is worrying so many people admit to driving while feeling stressed, putting themselves and others at risk. Motorists should remain calm to ensure they are concentrating fully on the road and if very stressed, should think twice about getting behind the wheel." For further information, visit:

http://www.fleetnewsnet.co.uk/news/view_article.asp?art_ID=43087&s=view_article Source: Fleet News, February 1

Vibrating Earpiece To Prevent Serious Roadway Crashes In Europe

Every year, traffic on EU roads results in more than 40,000 victims. Research has shown that 10 to 20% of all serious crashes are caused by falling asleep behind the wheel. Fatigue is a risk associated with all modes of transportation. Safety-Ear is an affordable fatigue detection device that may prevent many traffic victims and serious crashes every year. The device ensures that the tired driver hears a sharp beep or feels the device vibrating in his/her ear as soon as he/she is at risk of dozing off. The driver gets the warning from a small device worn behind the right ear. As soon as the driver's head



bends forward in a predetermined angle, the Safety-Ear will send the signal. For further information, visit: <http://www.safety-ear.com/press.html>

50% Of NZ Truck Drivers Not Wearing Seatbelts

A 2006 survey by Research New Zealand, involving nearly 1,500 heavy goods vehicles, found truck drivers wearing seatbelts only 50% of the time (slightly higher rates in the inner city and slightly lower rates on inter-city trips). "Many truck drivers seem to think they are better off being thrown out of a truck than being restrained within it during a crash," says Debbie Stearns, Programme Manager for ACC. "That result is of real concern. Them not wearing seatbelts puts the rest of us at greater risk when they have an accident. They are more likely to lose control of the vehicle and crash into someone else." As part of the campaign, ACC will be giving out high-visibility seat belt covers, to help the Police more easily identify those people wearing seat belts. Police and the Commercial Vehicle Investigation Unit will also be stepping up their existing enforcement, issuing tickets to everyone caught without a seat belt fastened. This will be reinforced by messages on billboards, truck backs, radio and posters. The campaign will kick off in February 2007.

Canadian Men Injured in Crash Awarded Large Personal Injury Judgment

Two Ontario men who suffered "catastrophic" injuries after they were thrown from a car driven by an intoxicated friend were awarded \$24-million, one of Canada's largest-ever personal injury judgments. The driver of the car and Ford Credit Canada Leasing Ltd, the owner of the driver's pickup truck must pay the damage to two of the passengers for their injuries even though they were not wearing seatbelts. Canadian law allows auto-leasing companies to be sued for the conduct of clients driving their vehicles. For further information, visit:

<http://www.canada.com/nationalpost/news/story.html?id=cb57f02a-aacd-4cf2-ae7f-e8440c52b17d&k=24825> Source: Automotive Digest, February 1

A challenge To The Assumed Generalizability Of Prediction And Countermeasure For Risky Driving: Different Factors Predict Different Risky Driving Behaviors

In road safety, it may be debated whether all risky behaviors are sufficiently similar to be explained by similar factors. The often-assumed generalizability of the factors that influence risky driving behaviors has been inadequately tested. Study 1 (N=116) examined the role of demographic, personality and attitudinal factors in the prediction of a range of risky driving behaviors, for young drivers. Results illustrated that different driving behaviors were predicted by different factors (e.g., speeding was predicted by authority--rebellion, while drink driving was predicted by sensation seeking and optimism bias). Study 2 (N=127) examined the generalizability of these results to the general driving population. Study 1 results did not generalize. Predictive factors remained behavior-specific, but different predictor-behavior relationships were observed in the community sample. Overall, results suggest that future research and practice should focus on a multi-factor framework for specific risky driving behaviors, rather than assuming generalizability across behaviors and driving populations.

Source: Fernandes R, Job RF, Hatfield J. J Safety Res 2007